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September 28, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "P. Browning", is written over the printed name of Philip L. Browning.

WESTSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTER FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Westside Children's Center Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2016. The FFA has one site located in the Second Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide an interdisciplinary resource that provides crucial support to our community by uniting and strengthening families so that all children can achieve their optimal growth and development and reach their full potential in the safety of permanent and nurturing families."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency, and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the FFA's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in 8 of 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment. The OHCMD noted an opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Teamwork.

In May 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Teamwork. The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendation noted in this report.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

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If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:KR
KDR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Heather Carrigan, Chief Executive Officer, Westside Children's Center FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**WESTSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTER FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016**

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Westside Children's Center Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2016. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the FFA's service delivery and to ensure that the FFA is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment, which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness, and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

The QAR is an in-depth case review and interview process designed to assess how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well the services are working. The QAR utilizes a six-point rating scale as a *yardstick* for measuring the situation observed in specific focus areas. The QAR assessed the following focus areas:

Status Indicators:

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

Practice Indicators:

- Engagement
- Service Needs
- Assessment & Linkages
- Teamwork
- Tracking & Adjustment

For Status Indicators, the QAR focuses on the focus child's functioning during the most recent 30-day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR focuses on the FFA's service delivery during the most recent 90-day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, one Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Worker (CSW), three FFA staff members, and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 13 DCFS placed children in 10 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was ten months, and their average age was two, as the FFA's primary focus is adoption of young children; two of the sample children were pre-verbal and one had limited verbal skills. The focus children were randomly selected. Two of the focus children

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were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review.

QAR SCORING

The FFA received a score for each focus area based on information gathered from on-site visits, agency file reviews, DCFS court reports and updated case plans, interviews with the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

| Focus Area | Minimum Acceptable Score | FFA QAR Score | FFA QAR Rating |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Safety - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children are free of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings. | 6 | 6 - Optimal Safety Status | The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers and are protected well at all times. Protective strategies are fully operative and dependable. |
| Permanency - The degree to which the focus children are living with certified foster parents, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the FFA staff, certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan. | 5 | 5 - Good Status | The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and team members have confidence will endure lifelong. |

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| Focus Area | Minimum Acceptable Score | FFA QAR Score | FFA QAR Rating |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|
| Placement Stability - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions. | 5 | 5 - Good Stability | The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in either setting over the past 30 days. |
| Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means. | 5 | 5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections | Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits. |
| Engagement - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents working with the focus children, their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children's strengths and needs. | 5 | 5 - Good Engagement Efforts | To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable), caregivers and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used. |

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| Focus Area | Minimum Acceptable Score | FFA QAR Score | FFA QAR Rating |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|
| Service Needs - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs. | 5 | 5 - Good Supports and Services | A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. |
| Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals. | 5 | 5 - Good Assessment and Understanding | The focus children's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is frequently updated. |
| Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or makes plans together. | 5 | 4 - Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork | The team contains some of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks and/or plans together. |

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| Focus Area | Minimum Acceptable Score | FFA QAR Score | FFA QAR Rating |
|--|--------------------------|--|---|
| Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes. | 5 | 5 - Good Tracking and Adjustment Process | Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status is occurring. |

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the FFA in January 2015, and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Teamwork. In July 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in this area. Based on the information below, it appears there is a continued need for improvement in the area of Teamwork on their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

| Status Indicators | Safety | Permanency | Placement Stability | Visitation |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| 2014-2015 Scores | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 2015-2016 Scores | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

In the area of Safety, the FFA continues to provide optimal safety for the focus children. The focus children are under the age of three, one had limited verbal capacity, and two were pre-verbal and unable to provide statements. However, the focus children appeared well adjusted and very comfortable in their placement with their certified foster parents. The focus children interacted with the certified foster parents in a loving manner, appeared to have a strong bond with them, and were observed to confidently depend on their certified foster parents for their wants or needs. One of the certified foster parents was observed to be very sensitive to the focus child's need for security, as it was noted that during the QAR interview with the certified foster parent, the focus child became overwhelmed by the presence of the QAR Reviewer. The certified foster parent provided the focus child with a transitional object, exercised patience, and spoke calming words to the focus child. Because of the certified foster parents' patience and understanding of his specific needs, the focus child became more comfortable with the presence of the QAR Reviewer and began to play freely and

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interact more with the QAR Reviewer. The FFA Social Workers reported that they continue to complete home visits semi-monthly or more often, if the certified foster parents need extra support. The certified foster parents reported that they are able to contact the FFA staff 24-hours a day. The DCFS CSWs reported no child safety concerns and that the focus children are in safe living environments with caregivers that are dedicated to protecting the focus children at all times.

In the area of Permanency, the FFA continues to provide good permanence for the focus children. The FFA continues to assist the focus children in reaching their permanency goals by matching the focus children with certified foster parents that are committed to the permanent and concurrent plans of the focus children. Two of the focus children are receiving Family Reunification services and one focus child is receiving Adoption services. The FFA supports the permanency plans for reunification by ensuring monitored visitation occurs. The FFA staff also maintains constant communication with the DCFS CSWs regarding updates from Dependency Court. Additionally, the FFA provides the certified foster parents with training and support groups that assist the certified foster parents in supporting the placed children through the process of returning home or transitioning into a permanent home through adoption. All three of the focus children's certified foster parents are supportive of the case plan goal and concurrent plan for adoption. One of the focus children is receiving Adoption services, and the FFA Social Worker reported using age-appropriate language to help the focus child prepare for adoption.

In the area of Placement Stability, the FFA is continuing to provide good stable home environments for the focus children. The focus children have established positive relationships with their certified foster parents and are in homes that the team members have confidence will endure lifelong, if family reunification is not successful. None of the focus children have experienced any disruptions in their current placement. The FFA staff work to prevent placement disruption by completing thorough screenings of children prior to placement to ensure that the certified foster parents are prepared to cope with any trauma the children may have experienced prior to placement. The certified foster parents reported feeling supported by the FFA and indicated that they are provided with information about the children's history prior to placement. One of the certified foster parents reported that the FFA shares background information about the placed children prior to placement in the certified foster homes. The certified foster parent shared that this helps to increase the stability of the placements, because the FFA is able to make good matches between the placed children and the certified foster parents. In addition, the certified foster parents are able to prepare to address any special needs the children may have. The FFA continues to provide ongoing training and offers a support group at the FFA office for the certified foster parents to discuss concerns and experiences. In addition, the FFA Social Workers help to ensure stability through visits to the focus children in their certified foster homes and providing the certified foster parents with referrals to resources, such as the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Training, Intervention, Education, and Services (TIES) or Regional Center, when necessary.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA continues to provide effective services to ensure family connections are maintained for the focus children. One of the focus children no longer has

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visitation with his biological family, due to parental rights being terminated; however, the certified foster parent has arranged visitation with the focus child's sibling who is in another placement. Two of the focus children have monitored visits with their family members. The FFA continues to arrange monitored visitation, as per the Court orders, at the FFA office. The FFA is also continuing to utilize techniques to decrease disappointment with the focus children when parents do not show up for visits. This includes the FFA Social Workers calling the certified foster parents when and if the family members come to the office for visits prior to the certified foster parent driving to the office.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

| Practice Indicators | Engagement | Service Needs | Assessment & Linkages | Teamwork | Tracking & Adjustment |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 2014-2015 Scores | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| 2015-2016 Scores | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 |

In the area of Engagement and Service Needs, the FFA continues to make good efforts to collaborate with the DCFS CSW and certified foster parents in assessing the strengths and needs of the focus children. In regards to Engagement, the OHCMD QAR Reviewer observed that all three focus children had a strong attachment with their certified foster parents and were well adjusted to their placements. The certified foster parents and FFA Social Workers all reported ongoing engagement between the DCFS CSWs, certified foster parent, and FFA Social Workers through telephone calls, e-mails, or group text messaging. The FFA also ensures that the focus children's needs are being met and are communicated between the DCFS CSWs, certified foster parents, and FFA Social Worker. In the area of Service Needs, one of the focus children was receiving speech and occupational therapy and was enrolled in a specialized school where all services were being provided on site. The other two focus children, both one-year-old, were developmentally on-target and did not present with any service needs at the time of the review. The focus children's medical needs were attended to by the certified foster parents, with oversight by the FFA Social Workers. All of the certified foster parents reported participating in the UCLA TIES for Families Adoption Program, where they receive additional therapeutic support.

In the areas of Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to assess the focus children's needs and provides interventions for them to function effectively in daily settings. The FFA Social Workers utilizing an Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), a developmental assessment tool that asks questions that help the certified foster parents and FFA Social Workers evaluate developmental milestones for the children in placement. One of the focus children's certified foster parents requested an assessment of the focus child.

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The information obtained through the assessment was useful in obtaining an Individualized Education Plan. The focus child is receiving appropriate services to address his academic and social/emotional needs, including speech and occupational therapy. In the area of Tracking & Adjustment, intervention strategies identified in the case plans and Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) matched the services that are being provided to the focus children. The FFA managers and the FFA Social Workers continue to review the focus children's status on a semi-monthly basis with the certified foster parents during home visits and is documented in case notes and the NSP quarterly. Additionally, the ASQ tool is utilized by the FFA Social Workers and shared with the certified foster parents and DCFS CSWs to assess, track, and document all of the placed children's developmental milestones that are being met. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA stays in regular contact with them regarding the progress and adjustments of the focus children.

In the area of Teamwork, the OHCMD found that the FFA had not implemented the 2014-2015 QIP. During the 2014-2015 QAR, the OHCMD found that the FFA was not including family members or DCFS CSWs in team meetings. To address this concern, the FFA stated that they would make an effort to invite all team members to team meetings at key points throughout the case. During the 2015-2016 QAR, the OHCMD found that the FFA continues to need improvement in the area of Teamwork. The FFA Social Workers reported that formal team meetings were not being held. Although there appears to be good communication between the certified foster parents, FFA Social Workers, and DCFS CSWs, family members/NREFMs need to be included in discussions regarding the ongoing assessment of the focus children's needs and case plan development. Additionally, during the interview with one of the certified foster parents of a focus child, the certified foster parent did not speak about the focus child's family member in an encouraging manner. The same certified foster parent provided transportation, but is not engaged in the visitation or monitoring process. The QAR Reviewer discussed with the FFA staff the importance of certified foster parents understanding their role in fostering placed children. The certified foster parent for the focus child should be involved in more teaming efforts with the family. It would be beneficial to the placed children if there was increased teamwork and more interaction between the certified foster parents and biological family members.

The OHCMD QAR Reviewer met with the FFA staff to discuss why the previous QIP was not implemented and to work together to develop a new QIP that would be successful for the FFA and the placed children in their care.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In May 2016, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Certified Foster Homes, Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery, and Personal Records. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure that timely safety inspections of the certified foster homes are completed, DCFS CSWs' authorization for implementation of NSPs is obtained, NSPs are comprehensive, and ensuring that employees sign criminal background statements timely.

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In May 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support addressing methods on improving in the area of Teamwork. The FFA submitted the attached approved QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.



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June 21, 2016

Patricia Bolanos-Gonzalez CSA II
Department of Children and Family Services
Out-of-Home Care Management Division
9320 Telstar Ave., Room 216
Los Angeles, CA. 91731

Re: Quality Assurance Review 2015-2016

Dear Ms. Bolanos-Gonzalez,

Thank you so much for conducting our annual Foster Family Agency Quality Assurance Review in 2015-2016. All the families felt comfortable having Aiyana in their home, and we appreciate all of your helpful feedback.

Below please find the Quality Improvement Plan pertaining to the FFA Quality Assurance Review (QAR), Fiscal year 2015-2016:

Area Needing Improvement – Teamwork – The degree to which the “right people” for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or makes plans together.

Quality Improvement Plan

Although the same deficiency was noted in the last QAR, WCC was able to successfully meet the first part stated in the QIP, for “social workers to make every effort to meet the CSW’s face to face at a home visit in the beginning of every case” whenever possible.

- WCC social workers continue to connect with the CSW face-to-face at home visits and/or monitored visits in the office throughout the life of a case by coordinating DCFS and FFA visits whenever possible. These efforts have proved to be successful in most instances.

Although WCC was able to accomplish the first part of the QIP, it is noted that we need to continue to improve upon the second part stated in the last QIP, to “make an effort to invite all team members to a meeting at key points throughout the case to keep everyone involved informed and an active part of the case planning process”. Unfortunately, WCC had staffing changes soon after the last QIP, which created a challenge in establishing this new protocol.



Working Hard in Hard to Change Lives

- While WCC social workers regularly meet with CSWs, foster parents, and foster children at key points throughout the case to keep everyone involved informed and an active part of the case planning process, it is recognized that we need to make greater efforts to invite birth families to formal meetings.
- It is important to note that WCC social workers have been successful in helping to connect the foster family to the birth family by encouraging direct conversations between foster and birth parents during monitored visitation.
- Moving forward, the WCC FFA team will make every effort to include all team members, including birth family, to a quarterly meeting. This will be done specifically by inviting the birth family involved in the case to participate in the NSP and treatment planning. In this way, the birth parents, foster child(ren), foster parents, and service providers participate together to promote and facilitate permanency and the ongoing engagement between the birth family and foster family.
 - The FFA supervisor will print out the upcoming quarterly NSP due dates at the beginning of each month and hand out the printout to each FFA social worker as a reminder to invite all parties of the team to participate in the NSP process. All members of the team will be notified of the meeting at least 1 month in advance of the NSP due date. The FFA social worker will make at least 3 efforts to invite each member of the team, and document these efforts by printing out the emails sent and the log of phone calls made to each team member. The FFA supervisor will review these efforts and problem-solve with the FFA social worker to come up with ways to engage team members, especially birth family.

It is also noted that during the foster parent interviews there was an instance of a foster parent speaking badly about the birth mother of the toddler she is fostering.

- WCC continues to educate families at the front end through MAPP training, which extensively addresses the importance of strong positive relationships between foster parents and birth families. WCC recognizes that building these relationships between families supports the



emotional, physical and social development of children, and strengthens families' ability to rebuild and reunite when possible.

- It is important to recognize that WCC has been working with this particular foster parent since the beginning of the placement to reframe her negative viewpoints about the birth mother and to educate her on the importance of speaking positively about the birth family at all times. The FFA social worker has worked with this parent at many monitored visits and home visits on this issue.
- It is also important to note that this particular foster parent has improved greatly over time, often showing empathy for the birth parent. Regardless, WCC recognizes the need to continue to work with her to ensure a more optimistic outlook to benefit the child and family and to be more supportive of family reunification.
 - The FFA social worker will continue to speak with this foster parent about how to view the birth mother in a positive light. The FFA social worker will research articles and books (both geared toward young children and adoptive parents) and share with the foster mother to help give her language to use when talking to her foster child about his birth mother, both now and in the future.
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Please contact us if you need further clarification on our responses.

Best Regards,

Jill Rosenberg, MSW
Foster Care and Adoptions Supervisor